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REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: J. A. MWANIKI (Kenya)

Chapter ___. DEMOGRAPHIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENT STATISTICS

Patterns of consumption: qualitative aspects of development

1. The Commission considered item 9 (d) of its agenda at its 443rd meeting on 7 February 1991. It had before it the report prepared by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) entitled "Case studies carried out by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development on qualitative aspects of development and on the preparations for the planned international statistical meeting on indicators of patterns of consumption" (E/CN.3/1991/21).

2. The Commission noted that four activities had been carried out under the agenda item. They comprised four country case studies (Côte d'Ivoire, India, Kenya, Morocco), a synthesis report based on those studies, a longer monograph drawing upon the recent literature and the past work of UNRISD on development indicators, and an international meeting of experts scheduled to be held in Rabat, Morocco, 8-11 April 1991.

3. The Commission expressed its appreciation for the high quality of the report prepared by UNRISD. The report did an excellent job of synthesizing useful findings and policy suggestions from the four case studies and from the Institute's own past work in the area. In particular, the Commission stressed the need to draw lessons from the case studies for the design of new and ongoing programmes by national authorities and the international development community. Particularly

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useful points in the report concerned the strengths and limitations of different data sources, the need to use the available data with care and caution, the problems identified in the case studies in using unitary or composite indices, the problems caused by data overloads and high costs, and the considerable scope for low-cost, innovative techniques. At the same time, the Commission considered it important that such innovative measurement techniques be placed in the context of ongoing statistical programmes and organizations so as to maximize the usefulness of the results obtained.

4. The Commission noted with appreciation the initiative taken by Morocco to strengthen its efforts to collect a comprehensive set of indicators on social development. The work of other international agencies in the field was also noted, including the work of FAO and WHO to update and improve indicators on health and nutrition status and the world food situation.

5. The Commission noted the importance and timeliness of the international seminar at Rabat, which would provide an opportunity to review the state of the art and recent advances in thinking on development indicators. It would also be an occasion for discussion of some of the major initiatives taken by the international agencies to strengthen the work on social indicators in developing countries. The Commission expressed its appreciation to the Government of Morocco and UNRISD for the preparatory work done for the seminar. It also noted with appreciation the close inter-agency co-operation in the planning of the seminar.

Action by the Commission

6. The Commission:

(a) Endorsed the work undertaken by UNRISD in close co-operation with the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat and other international agencies, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 40/179;

(b) Expressed its appreciation to the Government of Morocco for hosting the international expert seminar on social indicators of development;

(c) Urged UNRISD, in co-operation with the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat and other agencies to disseminate widely the findings and lessons of the case studies contained in the document prepared by UNRISD;

(d) Emphasized the importance of linking innovative indicators and collection techniques with ongoing statistical programmes and organizations;

(e) Requested the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activity to place the item in question on the agenda of its next meeting with a view to considering how the conclusions and suggestions contained in the UNRISD report might assist in the ongoing work and design of new programmes on social indicators.